

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 028940
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 028940

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XF, US

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH ARAB AMBASSADORS

1. AMBASSADORS OF LEBANON, EGYPT, SYRIA, SAUDI ARABIA,
AND JORDANIAN CHARGE MET WITH SECRETARY FEBRUARY 7 AT
LATTER'S INVITATION FOR GENERAL DISCUSSION OF HIS
FEBRUARY 14-21 VISIT TO MIDDLE EAST. SECRETARY TOLD ARAB
DIPLOMATS THAT U.S. IS DETERMINED TO PRESS FORWARD FOR
MIDDLE EAST PEACE NEGOTIATIONS THIS YEAR AND THAT IT IS
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO HAVE FRANK VIEWS OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 028940

IF REALISTIC PROGRESS COULD BE MADE. SECRETARY STRESSED
THAT U.S. HAS NO PLANS OR PROPOSALS FOR PEACE NOW, BUT
THAT U.S. DIPLOMATIC STRATEGY WILL DEPEND TO GREAT EXTENT
ON WHAT HE LEARNS ON TRIP. HE SAID HE CONSIDERS TRIP
VERY IMPORTANT FIRST STEP AS PARTIES MOVE FORWARD TO MIDDLE
EAST PEACE. SECRETARY EXPRESSED HOPE THAT PARTIES TO THE
MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE REMAIN FLEXIBLE SO THAT NO SIDE IS

LOCKED INTO ANY POSITION BEFORE NEGOTIATION PROCESS CAN
MOVE FORWARD.

2. SPEAKING FOR ARAB SIDE, LEBANESE AMBASSADOR KABBANI
SAID ARABS REALIZE U.S. HAS NO CONCRETE PROPOSALS NOW AND
PROMISED THAT SECRETARY WOULD FIND ARAB GOVERNMENTS
FLEXIBLE AND READY TO DISCUSS PEACE WITHOUT PRIOR
CONDITIONS. HE EXPRESSED REGRET THAT ACCORDING TO MORNING
PRESS REPORTS, ISRAEL WAS SETTING UP CONDITIONS. (FYI:
NEW YORK TIMES REPORT QUOTING UNNAMED SENIOR GOI OFFICIAL
CALLING FOR RESUMPTION OF STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS AND
BARRING ANY PLO PRESENCE AT RESUMED GENEVA TALKS.)

3. SECRETARY SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED TO HEAR THAT ARAB
GOVERNMENTS REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND REEMPHASIZED U.S. AIM
TO START THE PROCESS TOWARD PEACE THIS YEAR. HE ALSO
STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF ALL SIDES PROCEEDING FROM A FIRM
BASIS.

4. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR KABBANI SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WAS
VERY ENCOURAGED BY PRESIDENT'S AND SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS
EMPHASIZING THE OBJECTIVE OF RECONVENING PEACE TALKS AT
GENEVA THIS YEAR. HE NOTED ARAB LEADERS HAVE BEEN
FORTHCOMING ABOUT MOVING TOWARD PEACE IN 1977. HE
REGRETTED THAT ISRAEL SEEMS TO WANT TO PLACE OBSTACLES
IN PATH OF PEACE BY CALLING FOR RESUMED STEP-BY-STEP
NEGOTIATIONS. HE ALSO SAID ISRAEL IS CREATING TENSION
AT THE LEBANESE BORDER. JORDANIAN CHARGE AL-HADID ALSO
EXPRESSED PLEASURE AT U.S. INTENTIONS AND SAID THAT
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 028940

(FYI UNCONFIRMED END FYI) REPORT IN FEBRUARY 6 WASHINGTON
POST TO EFFECT THAT STATE DEPARTMENT MOVING TOWARD TURNING
DOWN ISRAELI REQUEST FOR CONCUSSION BOMBS -- CBU'S --
WOULD BE QUOTE GOOD PRESENT UNQUOTE TO PEACE PROCESS.

5. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR GHORBAL EXPRESSED HOPE THAT U.S.
WOULD QUICKLY MOVE BEYOND GOAL OF QUOTE STARTING THE
PROCESS UNQUOTE. ECHOING HIS COLLEAGUES' STATEMENTS THAT
ARAB GOVERNMENTS ARE OPEN MINDED AND READY TO HELP,
GHORBAL SAID WE ALL, INCLUDING U.S., KNOW THAT STEP-BY-
STEP NEGOTIATIONS HAVE HAD THEIR DAY. ALL THE ARAB
GOVERNMENTS WANT TO MOVE TO COMPLETE SETTLEMENT, THERE
COULD BE NO MORE QUOTE BEATING AROUND THE BUSH -- NO MORE
BIT FOR BIT UNQUOTE. GHORBAL SAID IT IMPORTANT FOR
SECRETARY, WHO WILL HEAR MANY OPINIONS ON MIDDLE EAST
TRIP, TO HAVE AN IDEA OF U.S. POSITION. GHORBAL ALSO
REFERRED TO WASHINGTON POST REPORT ON CBU'S SAYING THAT
IF ADMINISTRATION DENIES SALE OF THIS WEAPON TO ISRAEL,
IT WILL HELP NEGOTIATIONS. GHORBAL SAID OVERALL NEGOTIA-

TIONS WILL BE FACILITATED IF U.S. CAN AVOID RESPONDING TO ISRAELI REQUESTS FOR MODERN ARMS. SUCH A POLICY, GHORBAL CONTINUED, WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH SECRETARY'S OWN CRITERIA FOR ARMS SALES TO MIDDLE EAST MENTIONED AT HIS CONFIRMATION HEARINGS. (FYI: ARMS MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH LEGITIMATE SECURITY NEEDS OF COUNTRIES CONCERNED; SALES MUST BE CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO EFFECT ON SEARCH FOR PEACE.)

SECRET

6. SECRETARY SAID U.S. SHARED ARAB GOVERNMENTS' FEELING THAT REAL PROGRESS IS NEEDED AND THAT WE USE TERM QUOTE START THE PROCESS UNQUOTE BECAUSE WE MUST START. HOWEVER, SECRETARY SAID, U.S. WILL HAVE A VISION OF ITS PEACE-MAKING STRATEGY AFTER IT HAS CONSULTED WITH INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 028940

7. SAUDI AMBASSADOR ALIREZA REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S POSITION THAT IT WILL ACCEPT ANY SETTLEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARAB STATES CONCERNED. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS UNDER SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FROM KING KHALID TO TELL SECRETARY THAT SAUDI ARABIA REMAINS VERY ADAMANT ABOUT STATUS OF JERUSALEM, DESPITE PASSING AWAY OF LATE KING FAISAL. AMBASSADOR SAID SECRETARY WOULD HEAR MORE ABOUT THIS SUBJECT WHEN HE VISITS RIYADH.

8. EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN RAISED QUESTION OF PLO PARTICIPATION IN PEACE PROCESS. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB SAID QUESTION WAS POTENTIAL COMPLICATION THAT COULD ONLY BE SETTLED IN NEGOTIATING PROCESS. SYRIAN REEMPHASIZED THAT ARABS DO NOT WISH TO COMPLICATE U.S. DIPLOMACY BY PRESSING PLO QUESTION, BUT SAID ISRAEL IS CONSISTENTLY RAISING OBSTACLES LIKE ESTABLISHING SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED AREAS. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR USG POSITION IN UN SECURITY COUNCIL CRITICISING ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN OCCUPIED AREAS. HE SAID EXPECTATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST ARE HIGH BECAUSE OF SECRETARY'S TRIP AND THAT ALL ARABS WANT TO RID THEMSELVES OF QUOTE THIS NIGHTMARE UNQUOTE OF A DISPUTE.

9. IN CLOSING, SECRETARY NOTED HE WOULD HAVE REPORT ON UN SYG WALDHEIM'S MIDDLE EAST TRIP BEFORE HE STARTS HIS OWN AND THAT HE ALSO EXPECTS TO HAVE MESSAGES FROM PRESIDENT CARTER TO THE ARAB HEADS OF STATE INVITING THEM TO VISIT WASHINGTON FOR FURTHER CONSULTATIONS.
VANCE

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